1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

587 jointly, or any one of them singly, were able to translate that claim into marriage depended on the other claims. Brotherhood in itself gave no exclusive right to widows, but of course a brother, being necessarily of the same clan and frequently of the same band as the deceased husband, was well in line to assert a claim to the widow if he could make the claim good. Cursory inspection of the genealogies reveals, however, a surprisingly small number of cases of men taking over the widows of their deceased brothers. At best it was a very minor factor in Tiwi marriage customs.

The parallel custom of the sororate—that is, of sisters being married to the same husband—was more common. It occurred both in connection with [595] infant bestowal, by a father promising *all* his daughters by a particular wife [584] to the same husband, or in connection with widow remarriage, whereby two or more full sisters, previously married to the same husband, passed together on his death to the same new husband. The sororate occurred more frequently in the first form than in the second, largely because, as already mentioned, widows had more say in their own marriages than baby girls had, but there was nothing obligatory nor required about it, as is shown by the frequent cases in which a father bestowed all his daughters by one wife on the same man but on the early death of that man rebestowed them *seriatim* on several different husbands. One got the impression, though no Tiwi ever made the point explicit, that within the Tiwi bestowal system the prevailing high rate of infantile and child mortality was an important factor in sustaining the sororate principle to the extent that it did exist. A father who bestowed upon a man the first daughter borne by a certain wife was almost obliged to bestow upon the same man the second daughter of the same wife if the first one died in infancy. Moreover, since most fathers bestowed their daughters with an eye to their own advantage, it was clearly desirable if he wanted to cement the goodwill of a prospective son-in-law, to promise him *all* the daughters produced by a certain wife, so that even though most of them died in infancy, at least one or two would be delivered in good condition at the age of puberty. [557] The aim of bestowal was to win friends and influence people, and a bestowal of a child who died before she reached the son-in-law did a father little good. A shrewd father could avoid this risk by following the sororate principle; a stupid or feckless father who scattered his daughters widely could well end up with as many disappointed sons-in-law as friendly ones, as the infantile and child mortality took its heavy toll of his young daughters. In the genealogies, sororate marriages in some form occur much more frequently than levirate marriages, but nonetheless their incidence is such as to indicate that they were a relatively minor feature in Tiwi marriages and that their occurrence was most frequently due to careful fathers trying to insure sons-in-law against disappointment, and themselves against charges of nondelivery.

171 582 No account of marriage in any Australian tribe can go very far without raising the difficult matter of the kinship system, since all the accounts we have of mainland Australian tribes tell us that all marriages there took place within a rigid kinship framework which required everybody to marry somebody who was automatically his or her cross-cousin (for example, a man and a daughter

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months after the attack on Darwin. Many of the older Tiwi who were in Darwin during the bombing did not survive the war; the psychological strain and lack of sufficient food was too much for them. Genealogies show that an unusual number of deaths occurred among Tiwi between 1942 and 1946.

When Western food supplies again became available, the old Tiwi bush living seems to have departed. The Tiwi suddenly realized their full dependence upon the products which only the whites could provide. As the war came to an end and one after another of the temporary military bases were abandoned, the missionaries and the Tiwi salvaged what they could, transporting large amounts of corrugated iron to Bathurst Island Mission for native huts. The Tiwi were drawn together around the Mission in larger numbers than ever before, their camps ranging in a line along the Mission beach. The majority of the Tiwi, about 600, considered Bathurst Island Mission their home, although some of the young adult males spent most of the year in Darwin. About 50 islanders lived adjacent to the half-caste Melville Island Mission at Garden Point. Another 150 were permanently located at the government settlement at Snake Bay. The remaining Tiwi, about 150, were year-round residents of Darwin; over one hundred lived at Bagot Native Compound and at an unsupervised native camp at Point Gunn directly opposite the southernmost tip of Melville Island; the rest were inmates at the leper colony. The resulting total population of about 950, in 1954, is only about a hundred less than the figure of 1062 which Hart obtained in his census of 1928-29.

Marriage Arrangements

We have discussed how, under the traditional Tiwi pattern of life, the greatest energies of mature males were expended in bargaining with each other for new wives. The old social system was one which had as normal features prenatal and early childhood engagements for females, remarriage for all widows, considerable age difference between marriage partners, and polygamy. The new Catholic system introduced by Father Gsell outlawed, or at least discouraged, polygamous marriages, nuptial unions between persons of greatly differing ages, and all prenatal or childhood betrothals. As indicated, Father Gsell initiated his new policies by purchasing young females and then allowing them to choose their own partners from among their single agemates.

It is of interest to inspect the actual circumstances surrounding one of the earliest unions which took place under Father Gsell's supervision. About 1914, Polly, an attractive young female who had already had a rather checkered career, having been stolen by a Yuwatja male from her rightful mate, was "stolen back" by another Tiwi, Timalarua of the Rangwila. Polly, however, decided that she did not want an old husband like Timalarua, so she ran away to the sisters and Father Gsell. In time, old Timalarua allowed Father Gsell to buy this wife who did not want to live with him. Shortly afterward, Father Gsell asked Polly whom she wanted to marry. Polly named Cabbagee as the

124 802 were *yadi*, *irrara*, *irradroma*, *arkwauri* and *inalli*, respectively one, two, three, few and many. Some natives had a vague idea of five and ten. A nominal roll of the dead [551] was impossible, as the names of the dead are *ardjidit*, "unlawful," "taboo." A method was arranged whereby flat sticks were used and notched. Separate sticks were taken for males and for females. A group would sit about and the dead identified by relationship with the living. A big notch in the sticks would be made for each adult, a smaller notch for a child, and a tiny notch for a baby. Records obtained in this way 165 showed that at least 56 men, 87 women, 17 boys, 25 girls and one male and one female infant had died. The population of the islands, before the epidemic, was estimated as a result of general enquiries to be about 650, so the known death roll of 187 indicates a high mortality rate.

The original rumour suggested that the natives were dying of measles, as someone had diagnosed some illnesses at the Mission about Christmas time as measles. The extremely low number of infant deaths was entirely against measles being the cause of the holocaust, and supports the native diagnosis of magic.

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